

THE UTILITY CREW SUPERVISOR¹

by Willard L. Grubb

Two important areas of supervision are safety and training. Some of the skills that a supervisor must have to be effective in his day-to-day operations include: 1) the ability to communicate, 2) the facts and experience to be able to compromise, 3) the ability to set priorities, and 4) the technical knowledge of his profession. The three major parties that a supervisor must satisfy are the utility or client, the employer, and the public, e.g., the property owner, government agencies, and the general public, sometimes referred to as public opinion.

A job description for a supervisor or general foreman includes these responsibilities:

1. General supervision of all of his crews. He checks all of his crews regularly for quality and quantity of work, maintaining proper tools and equipment on their trucks, and proper maintenance of aerial lifts and trucks.
2. Maintenance of proper crew strength including time for extended sickness and scheduled vacations, and for injuries involving extended periods of time.
3. Regular contacts with the utility arborist or designated representative. The extent and frequency of these contacts to be determined at the local level in order to pick up and dispatch work to his crews, and to keep the arborist or designated representative informed on progress of work and any other pertinent information.
4. Checking on all damage claims resulting from their operations.
5. Settlement of all damage claims resulting from their operations, e.g., reporting immediately all claims to the arborist or designated representative, and reporting final disposition of these claims.
6. Training of new personnel and keeping employees informed of changes in practices.
7. Maintenance of the training program and enforcement of the applicable safety rules and regulations of his employer, the utility, and O.S.H.A. Maintenance includes good housekeep-

ing, good crew conduct and appearance, and good customer relations by his crews.

8. Securing permission on "skips" where possible. Skips being defined as contacts that his own foremen were unable to make. If difficulty is experienced in working these contacts, they should be referred to the arborist or designated representative. The general foreman is not responsible for investigating customer requests nor is he responsible for securing permits from governmental agencies.

The supervisor must cope with many or all of these responsibilities on a daily basis. Setting priorities is one of the major problems a supervisor must learn to handle. One can learn to cope with the many demands made only through experience and a keen desire to do a thorough job. The abilities and skills a supervisor needs are technical know-how, ability to communicate with people, ability to set priorities, and knowledge and common sense to compromise.

What results when a supervisor does the job properly?

1. High quality and quantity of work, good public relations, economic operations, and satisfied clients.
2. Continuity of service to the client. The crew will be at full strength, a dependable work force with knowledge of the area.
3. Development and maintenance of a working relationship with the client personnel and the public (property owner).
4. Continuity of training in techniques and safety practices that will insure a minimum number of accidents.
5. Proper assignment of personnel and equipment to the designated work areas.
6. Solving of problems that arise efficiently and quickly because he knows his job.
7. Instructing his crews of any changes in procedures and practices that may occur.
8. A correct and even flow of paper work, such as time sheets, work distribution sheets, invoic-

¹Presented at the annual conference of the International Society of Arboriculture in Hartford Connecticut in August 1980.

ing, proper coding as to purchase orders and job numbers.

It is vital that supervisor and client coordinate their efforts to obtain the objectives of the program. The need for understanding one another's problems can be accomplished by group meetings of the responsible parties prior to starting the crews and periodic meetings thereafter. These meetings should include the personnel involved with the following responsibilities: rights-of-way, customer relations, safety, tree trimming, legal, and accounting.

A few major items for discussion and policies to be determined are: public relations practices. Know the bartering practices used to obtain the customer's permission to maintain clearance. Coordinate efforts with governmental agencies, municipalities, county road commissions, state highway departments, etc. There should be a periodic review of the program to evaluate the

work completed, discuss new ideas and methods, and solve any special problems that arise. Discuss schedules to coordinate with proposed expenditures for any given period and area. Discuss progress reports. These should be composite reports showing work completed by the month, anticipated completion date of an assigned area, and work area to be assigned. Discuss the flexibility of the contract to allow for minor changes in crew complement for efficiency. Discuss work standards and work specifications.

There is one additional area of responsibility that a supervisor has. He must conduct a profitable operation. After all, a reasonable return on the contractor's investment must be maintained in order to stay in business.

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ABSTRACT

Pitt, D.G., J. Kissida, and W. Gould, Jr. 1980. **How to design a windbreak.** *Am. Nurseryman* 152(10): 10-11, 50-51.

In designing residential landscapes, it is important to consider the direction from which winds blow in various seasons, the effect these winds have on human comfort, and how these winds can be controlled by carefully placing landscape materials. A Nebraska experiment station reported fuel savings of 23 percent between a house that was landscaped to minimize air infiltration and an identical house completely exposed to the winter wind. To intercept the chilling effect of winter winds and encourage the cooling effect of summer breezes, homeowners should consider placing windbreaks on their landscapes. A windbreak is an obstruction that is placed perpendicular to the wind's path, causing an alteration in the wind direction. This alteration in wind direction creates a small area on the upwind side of the windbreak and a larger area on its downwind side that are protected from the full force of the wind. Windbreaks that allow some wind penetration improve the windbreak's effectiveness. The design of a successful wind control planting requires an understanding of the physical principles of wind control and how different materials can best be used to take advantage of these principles.